

Just teething trouble

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

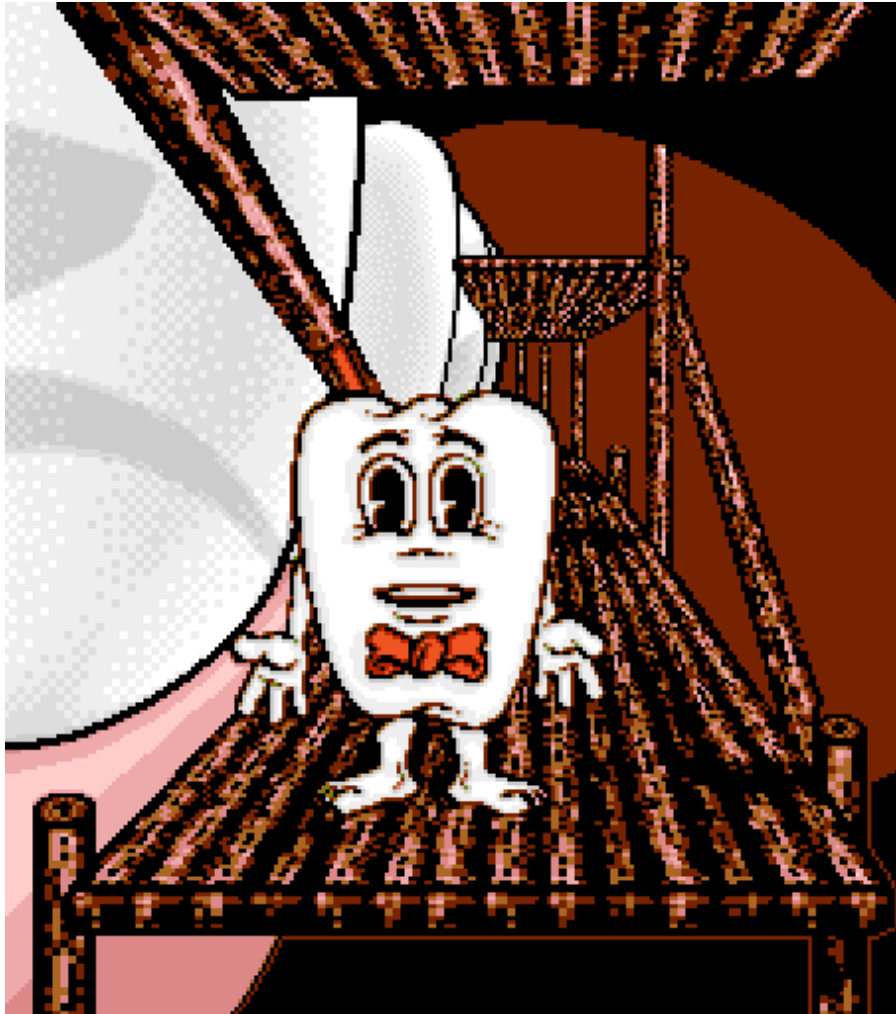
None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

As a kid I used to really struggle brushing my teeth. I'd stick the toothbrush in my ear, use Polyfilla instead of toothpaste and rinse my mouth out with Toilet Duck. It was a complicated business that totally baffled me. That was until the night of the third visit to A&E when a kind doctor suggested I try playing the Colgate promotional edutainment game. Let me tell you, it revolutionised my perplexing little world back in 1992!

Its full title is 'Harald Hardtand: Kampen om de Rene Taender' which should give you a clue it wasn't developed by Ocean in a dungeon studio beneath the centre of Manchester. Translated from its native Danish it equates to 'Harold Hardtooth in the Fight of the Clean Teeth'. Danish I've discovered isn't the most amenable language to being mangled through Google's foreign language decipher-o-matron so the manual will forever have to remain an enigma. Unless you happen to speak Danish, that's bound to help a bit.



Harold is a bipedal, bow-tie accoutred molar armed with a big goofy grin and a toothpaste gun. Here he stars in his own horizontally scrolling, traditional platform game, patrolling the inside of a child's mouth using wooden scaffolding for navigation, and blitzing sentient bacteria particles with minty fresh Colgate for "bright smiles and bright futures". An absolutely typical scenario for a '90s Amiga game then. These were ten a penny back then. I think my copy came in a double pack alongside Henrietta Healthy-eyes. Remember that classic?



Silverrock Productions were the A-Team tasked with teaching us sensible oral hygiene habits on behalf of the American Colgate-Palmolive conglomerate originally founded by soap peddler, William Colgate, in 1806. Who else would you nominate to carry the mantle other than the developers who had already gifted the world 'Guldkorn Expressen', a train-driving action game revolving around packaging and distributing OTA's honey puff breakfast cereal, dressed as their bear mascot? Aaron and John recorded an 'Amigos Play' video of this treasure if it takes your fancy.

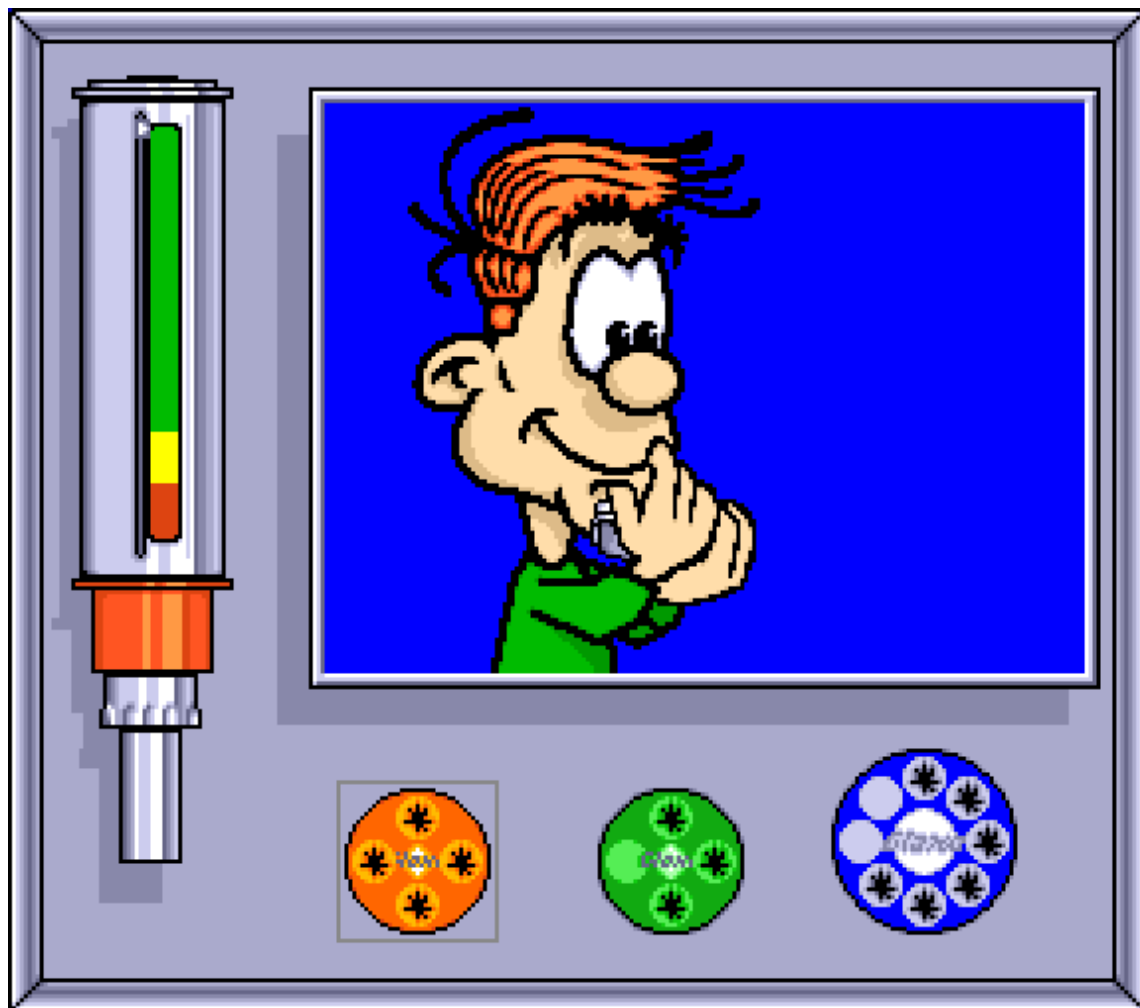


Silverrock's reputation clearly preceded them, which explains how they also came to be partnered with GlaxoSmithKline who commissioned them to code 'Georg Glaxo' in 1992. Being a pharmaceutical company with many fingers in the medication pie, this is a platformer starring an asthmatic boy who must battle against a number of 'aggravating factors' in the guise of dogs, cats, and other allergenic wildlife.



His power-ups are various types of health-promoting 'fuel' for his inhaler, while Georg despatches threats to his well-being with a shotgun. Children and firearms; a match made in heaven!

What massacring family pets has to do with asthma awareness is probably explained in the manual... which again I can't decipher because it's written in Danish. I'm sure it all makes perfect sense in the right context.

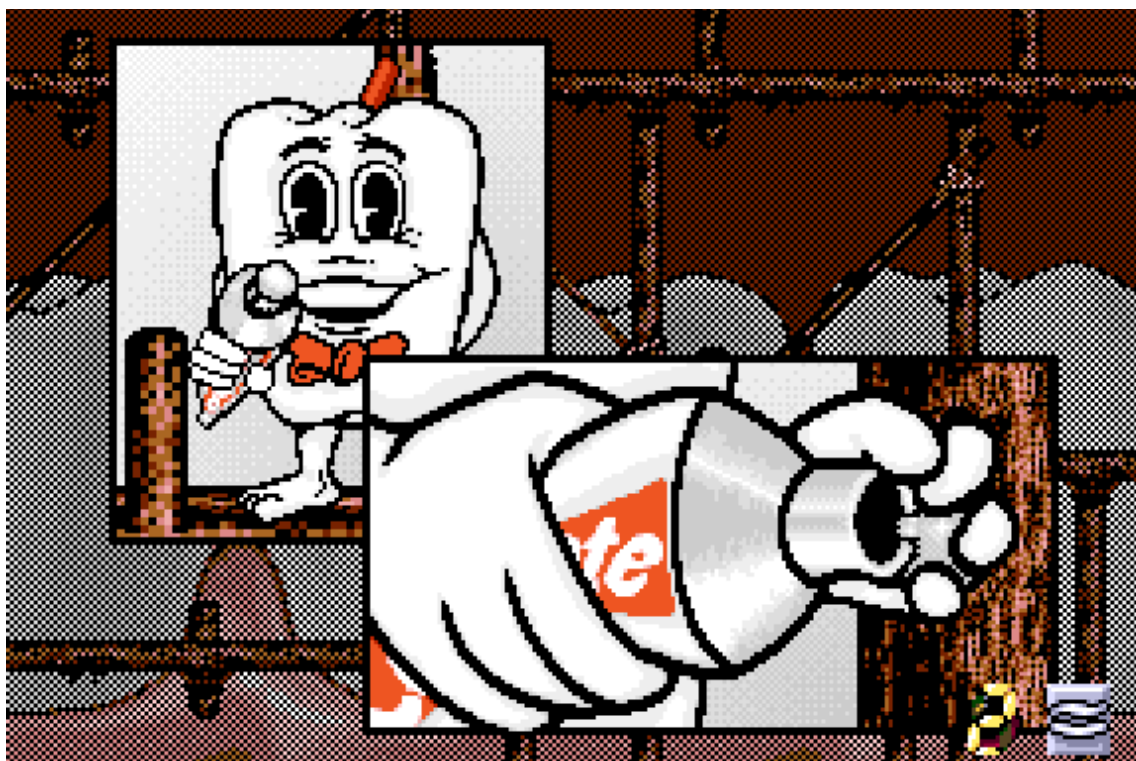


Leaving adware behind, Silverrock went on to produce the Hugo the Troll games series, the first of which was featured as an interactive phone-in game on the British, Saturday morning, magazine format TV show, What's Up Doc? (and everywhere else around the globe on similar shows). They were published under Silverrock's subsidiary entity, Interactive Television Entertainment, the latest entry in the range released as recently as 2015. Altogether there are 29 of them. Twenty-friggin'-nine!

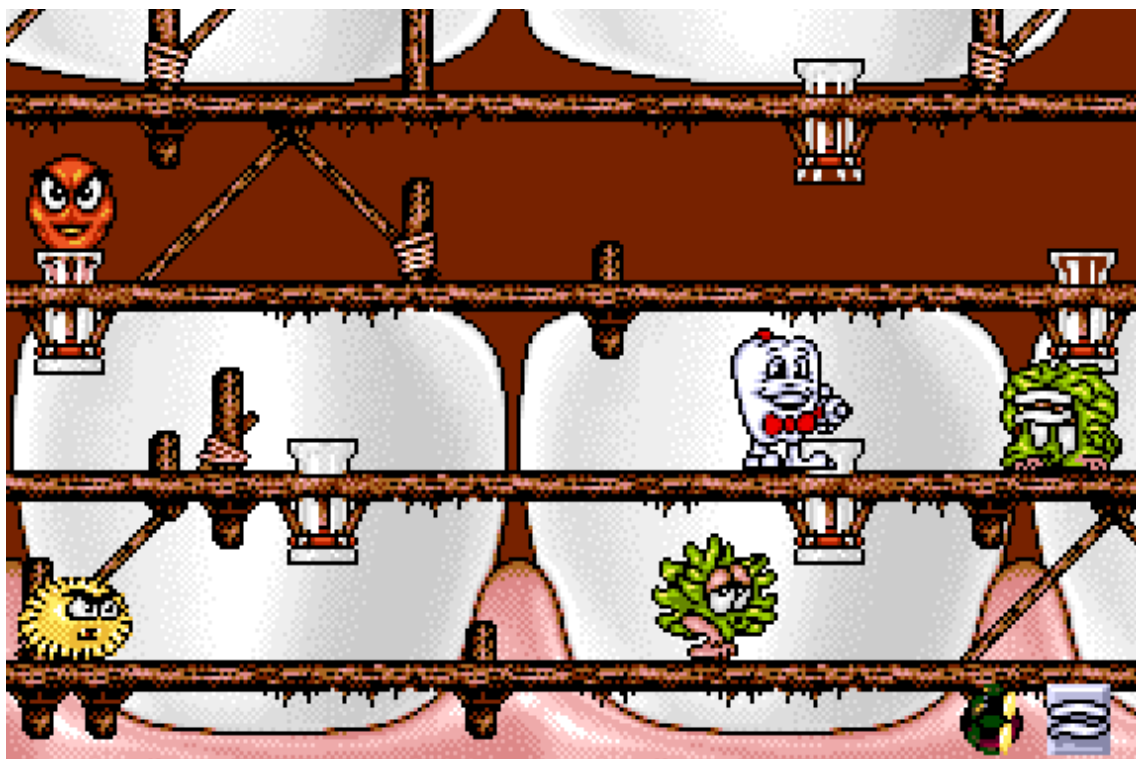


Meanwhile, back in the land of dental atrophy and saliva tsunamis, our objective is to protect the mouth of our anonymous host. This is achieved in either solo or two-player mode by blasting three kinds of wandering bacteria blobs with streams of upgradable toothpaste.

By grabbing power-ups we're able to convert a single stream into a double one, or even a solid block that looks rather like a waving, white surrender flag. Limited ammo can be replenished by snagging Colgate tubes strewn about the environment, and each shot is punctuated by Space Invaders sound effects. I suppose because that's what Silverrock stumbled across first in the soundbank.

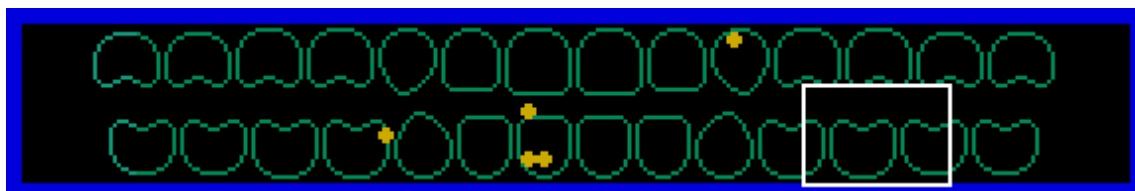


A number in the top left corner of the screen indicates the current level of decay, a figure determined by your ability to clear the neighbourhood of bacteria before the rot sets in. Dopey-eyed green furries inflict no damage to the teeth, but *will* sap your energy so need to be avoided or wiped out. Limbless, bouncing, yellow gribbles are more detrimental, whilst the armless, menacing red ones are the most noxious of all, going so far as whipping out a hammer to hack away at the enamel surface. These are also capable of absorbing the most hits before perishing so you won't want to let them survive any longer than is absolutely necessary.



All this - along with a textual guide to keeping your teeth clean, accessed via the main menu - I'm assured by Dr Tefal is based on concrete scientific research so can be used seamlessly in classrooms to teach kids how to preserve their gnashers. Baddies split and multiply, mutate and travel between platforms using suction tubes. Crucially, they'll also keep respawning ad-in-finitum unless you brush away their hut abodes with a giant toothbrush using the first function button. No, I have no idea why F1 is the magic key either. Who'd think to try that? Screen-clearing smart bombs detonated by pressing the enter key make much more sense.

Using the radar (a mouth map if you will) positioned at the bottom of the screen to locate them, it's your duty to purge each level of every last foe. With that chore ticked off the checklist, you're allowed to proceed to the next area, which unsurprisingly - everything being set in a mouth - is exactly the same as the last.



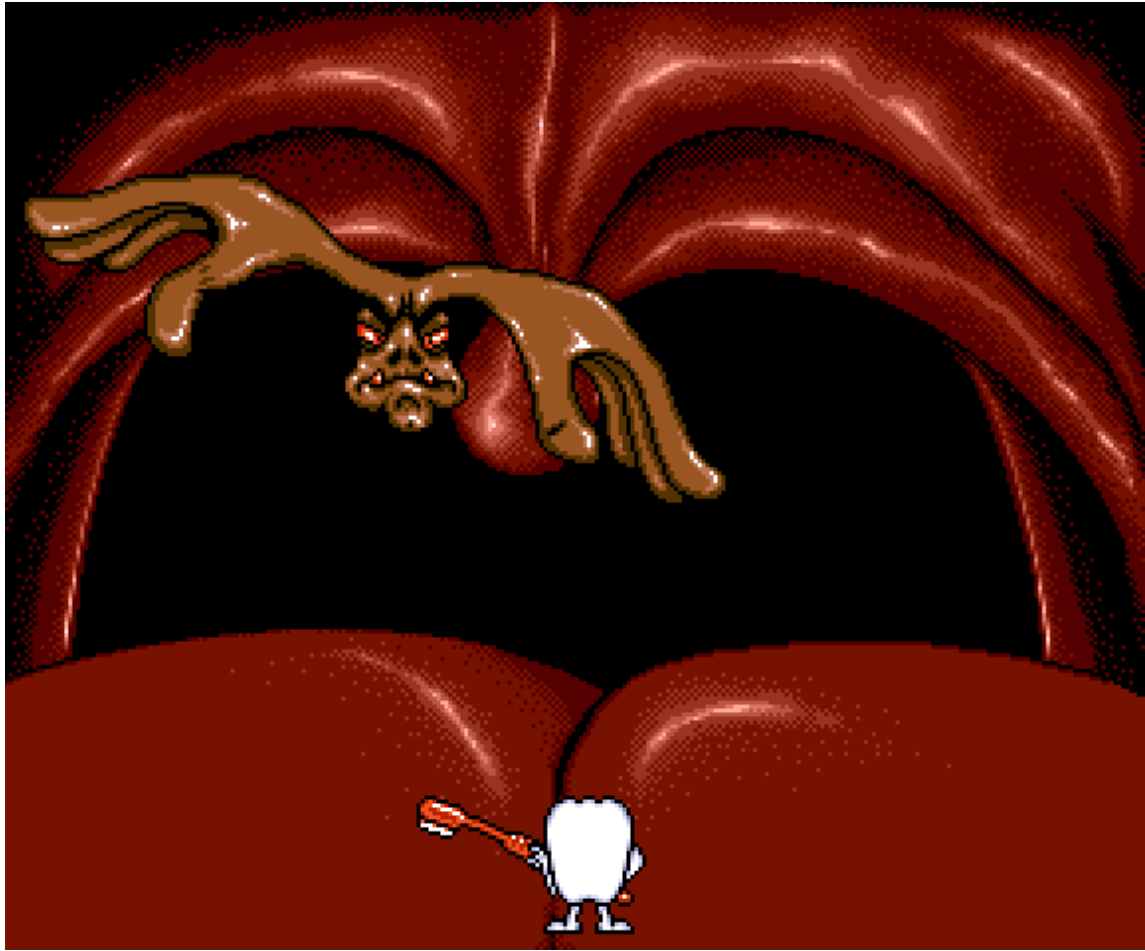
It's not the easiest game, and it's made all the more tricky by the delayed scrolling that doesn't respond until you get close to the edge of the screen, so you'll be extremely grateful for the spinning disc health and extra life pick-ups. As shocking as this sounds you bite the dust as soon as you've exhausted your energy reserves, or less predictably, if the erosion-o-meter reaches 99.



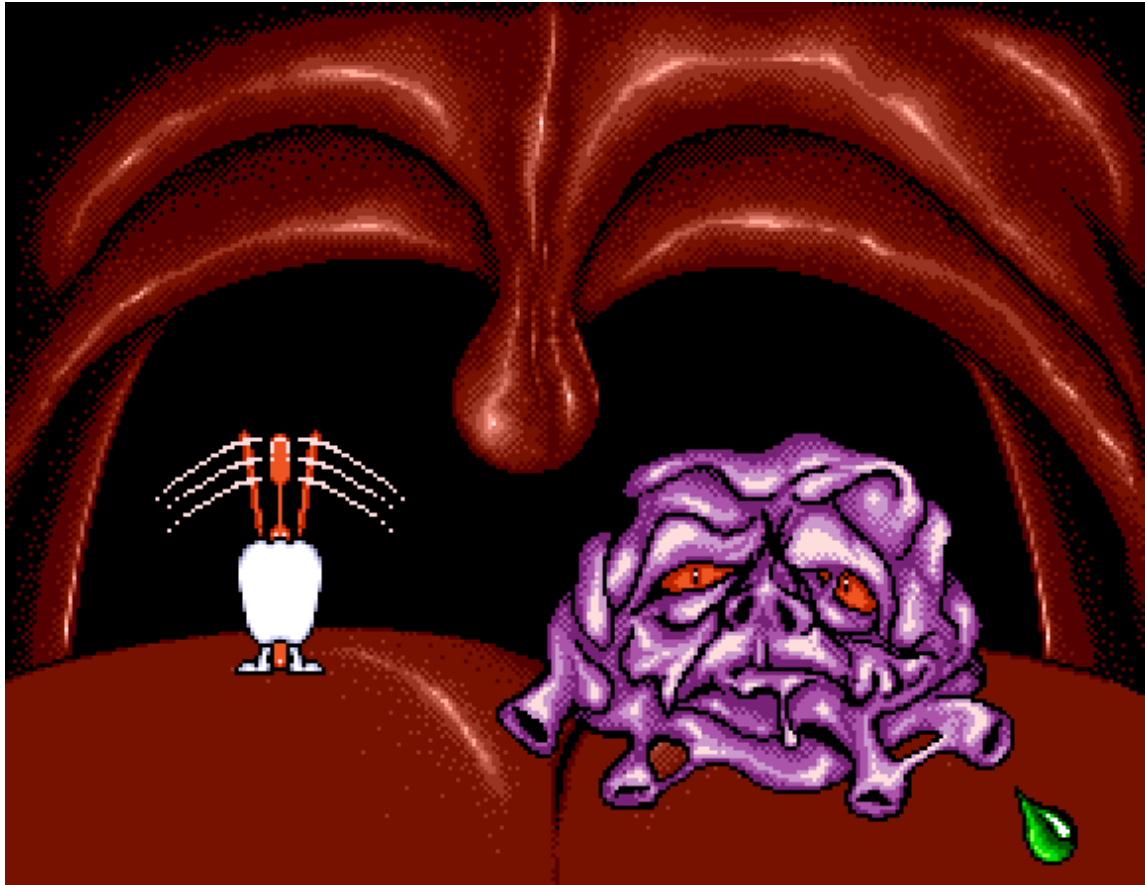
Luckily the controls work reasonably well and you restart where you died, although you *do* lose your power-ups as a consequence. Contrary to what you might expect, falling off the bottom ledge doesn't spell the end for Harry. You disappear out of view, yet can leap straight back up without incurring any injuries. I suppose the alternative would be spiralling down your host's esophagus, though of course, that would require extra animation work.

Aside from the minor plaque-generating delinquents, there are four inventive bosses to tackle, one following every three of the game's twelve levels. Rather than squirting them with Colgate, you swipe them into submission with your oversized brush. Well, technically it's normal-sized, it's just that *you're* the size of a baby tooth.

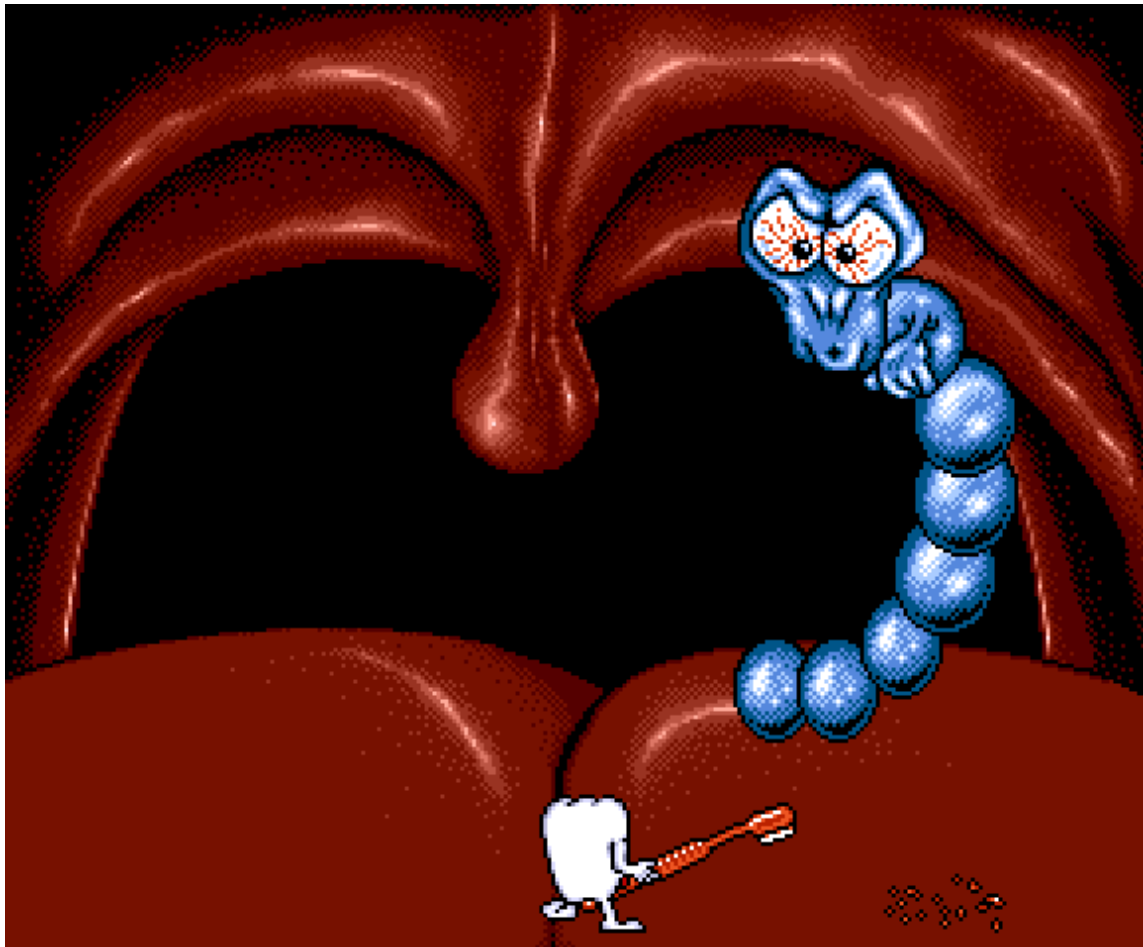
These monstrosities include a flying head with arms and hands protruding directly from the top to form tooth-swotting wings.



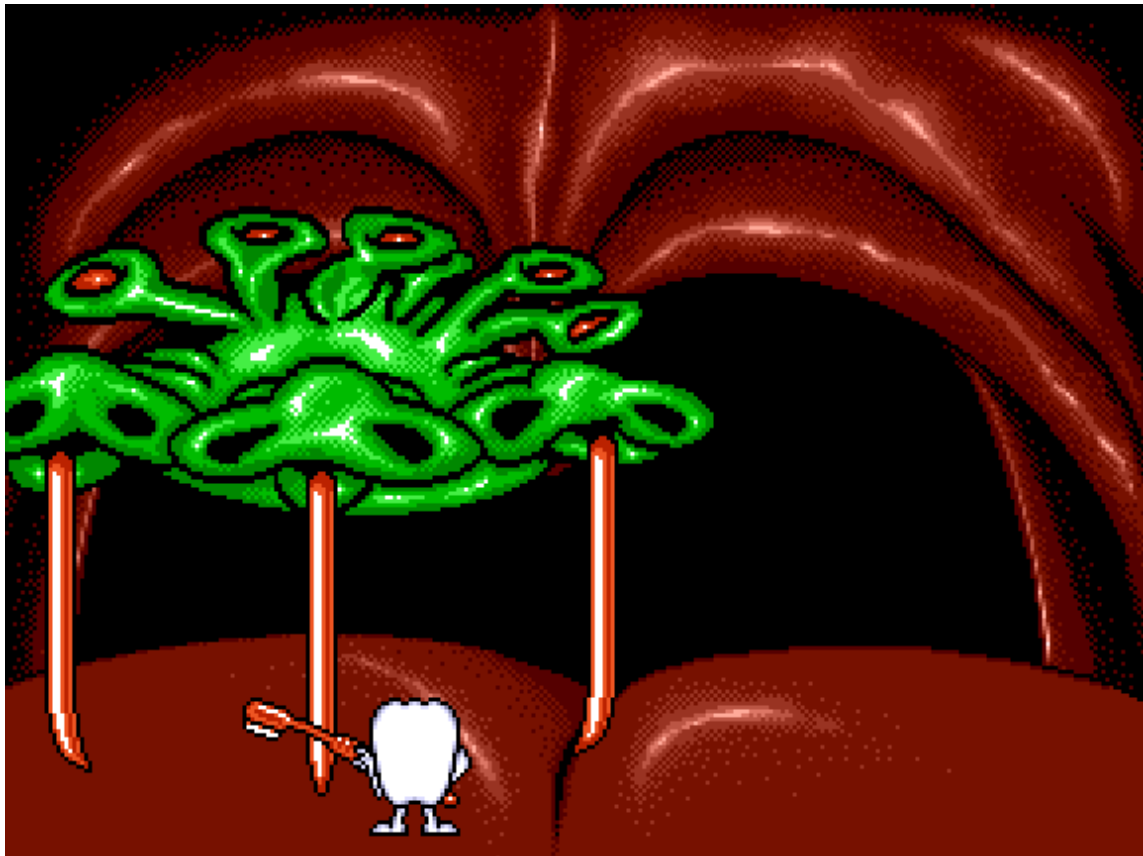
Then there's the purple, levitating, decapitated head that looks a bit like a cross between Jabba the Hutt and a wonky penne pasta meal.



Another constitutes a giant, floating, blue, blood-spitting worm with a chronic caffeine addiction problem.



Finally, we face a sightless, triple-snouted alien pig with multiple jiving antennae who gives us a good tongue-lashing, in triplicate.



Complete the game and your reward is an entry in the high score table. Oh, and the satisfaction of knowing you've done your bit to fight the perennial threat of tartar build-up and cavities. Dull, plodding, repetitive and lacking variety, much like the daily devoir of brushing one's teeth. This being a promotional game I don't suppose any money changed hands for it in one of those digital entertainment purchasing boutique thingies, so what more can you expect?



So there you go kids, let that be a lesson to you. Make sure you take diligent care of your teeth or Harry will pay you a visit to wage all-out war in your mouth, zapping critters left, right and centre, and erecting scaffolding to reach all the nooks and crannies.

Why do I get the impression you're not taking this entirely seriously? Gum disease and tooth loss are no joke, you know. They can lead to an agonising, slow death, or possibly something even *more* serious. Like having to read the back-catalogue of Cosmopolitan in the dentist's waiting room.